

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON COUNCIL MEETING PROCESS AND EFFICIENCIES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a briefing on this agenda item from Mr. Brett Wiedoff, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff officer, and offers the following comments/suggestions.

The GAP has noted in our [September 2022](#) report, members prefer to meet in person when possible, especially when complex or controversial groundfish items are before the Council. In-person meetings foster better interpersonal communication and discussion.

However, the GAP also understands that due to logistics or costs, it is sufficient to meet virtually at times. This works better when GAP members have met in person before and participants have had the chance to get to know new members, such as after new members are approved for new terms. Decisions to conduct virtual meetings for advisory bodies (ABs) during the Council week should be made carefully and in coordination with AB leadership.

For example, specific to the April 2023 meeting the GAP preferred meeting in person due to some important groundfish action items on the Council agenda. Moreover, the GAP requested an additional meeting day in advance of the Council to provide sufficient time to develop informed recommendations and reports for the Council. Unfortunately, we could not meet in person due to meeting logistics. We also did not meet a day earlier, resulting in agenda item discussions, production of five GAP reports, and review of more GAP reports the very first day. This creates a burden for GAP members, prevents comprehensive public comment on agenda items and forces Council members to review and consider a slew of comments on the Council floor.

Online GAP meetings in *advance* of an in-person meeting during the Council week may also be advantageous, especially if it is focused on an agenda item that is complex, it requires more time to develop a statement or it reaches a broader audience. For example, the GAP benefitted from a focused meeting on the Non-Trawl Rockfish Conservation Area virtual discussion prior to its meeting during the Council week.

Relative to hybrid meetings, where some GAP members are in person and others online, the GAP does not support hybrid meetings at this time because few efficiencies are gained and technological support for hybrid meetings is costly and temperamental. However, the GAP feels it is worthwhile to continue to explore hybrid options as technology progresses and efficiencies can be gained. It is appropriate to keep this as an option if – *if* – another pandemic or similar situation occurs in the future.

In summary:

- The GAP prefers meeting in person, especially for complex or controversial agenda items.
- One or two virtual meetings per year may be acceptable, but in consultation with GAP leadership.
- Hybrid alternatives should continue to be explored as time permits and technology progresses.